The Meeting of the Orient and the Occident

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"East is East and West is West
And never the twain shall meet."

Such was the thought of Kipling and such has been the thought of countless Occidentals regarding the Orient. Separated by an insurmountable barrier of prejudice, language, temperament and custom, the Orient has been to the Occident an unlocked mystery. The strange mysticism, the quaint fancy, the passive impersonality of the Oriental could not be fathomed by the open-minded, aggressive and individualistic Occidental.

"No man liveth unto himself." Neither can nation separate itself from nation or civilization from civilization. Commerce reaches its insatiable hand into the uttermost parts of the earth, and it was through commerce that the Orient and the Occident first met. The desire for ivory, tea, silk, spices, linked with the desire for new markets, was far too great to let racial differences stand in the way. Indeed, racial differences were overlooked and solid commercial ties were formed. Then came social ties and a different attitude of each to each. Hostility was displaced by friendship, suspicion by sympathy, and prejudice by community of interest, and in consequence the meeting of the Occident and the Orient is now at hand.

But with this meeting arises the inevitable question, "What will be the result of this coming together?" Or, as Prof. Reinch, of the University of Wisconsin has put it, "The great question that now agitates thinking minds is as to the future predominance of either tendency in the life of the world. Is the Western spirit to conquer or to be conquered, or is there to be a peaceful union of the two ancient civilizations combined into a higher harmony?" In order to answer this question satisfactorily we must understand the predominant characteristics of the Orient. As China is the true embodiment of the Orient we shall emphasize her civilization.

We are in the first place meeting the oldest civilization in the world. Centuries before Caesar's legions were conquering the barbarians in the wilds of Europe, China was the proud possessor of an advanced civilization. Five hundred years before Christ, Confucius taught the obverse of the Golden Rule. In the eighth century B. C. an eclipse of the sun verified a prediction made years earlier by Chinese astronomers.

It is this civilization begun centuries before the sacred star predicated the birth of Christ, that the Occident is meeting. When we understand what elements have kept Chinese civilization intact, we shall be able to understand how it will be possible for these same elements to exert a powerful influence on the world's civilization.

The first element is the sense of race perpetuity. "The ideals and institutions of one generation," held she, "can only be maintained when there is an abundant posterity to cherish, develop, and advance them." And ancestor worship was the result. Children were born to her as the sands of the sea. She has become strong with the strength of numbers.

The second element is race purity. The hearts of other civilizations were gradually eaten out by some monster demon, licentiousness, drunkenness or avarice, but China closed her doors in the face of these

evils. True, the opium habit began to fasten itself upon her, but China beholding her children dragged into opium hells, exclaimed, "We cannot afford to let opium ruin our manhood, or bring disgrace on our nation," and the manufacture and sale of opium was completely abolished. Like a huge ship, this nation has plunged through the storms of her national life slightly injured, but never wrecked. She has endured—a strong, sturdy, virile nation.

The third element is a love for peace. "They that take the sword shall perish with the sword." But before Christ spoke these words, China had already made them a national tradition. Consequently, she has never brought upon herself the vengeance of other nations, neither has the vitality of her people been sapped by the waste of war. China, temperamentally a peace loving nation, has lived while western nations have brought upon themselves the ruins that they visited upon others.

Another element that has contributed to the success of China is the ability of her citizens to unite into powerful organizations to overcome obstacles. When the abolition of opium was the issue, the opposing forces united into iron bands against it. When several provinces realized that cigarets were dulling the intellect of her sons and daughters, they piled cargo load upon cargo load, and then reduced them to ashes. When the Manchu dynasty became a seething sore on their national life, the Chinese united into powerful unified forces, banished the oppressors and established a republic; and it is because of this ability to unite into powerful organizations that China's republic will live, grow and prosper.

Time will not permit me to discuss two other important characteristics, her inherent yearning for knowledge, and her remarkable physical endurance, neither can I, at this point, consider the most important of her qualities, her interest in the deeper issues of life.

But you ask why China, with these qualities that ordinarily make for progress, should have remained so conservative? The answer is this: She lacked an energizing ideal. The impelling motive was missing. She had light, but it remained unfocused. She had power, but it was not collected. She had ability, but it was not developed; a superior code of morals, but she was not moral. She invented, but never perfected the invention; much learning, but never a science; perseverance undirected; democracy without a purpose; energy, but no motive. She was a veritable gold mine undeveloped, a mass of potential energy, a nation that had never discovered itself.

Before we consider what contribution the Orient will make to the 20th century civilization, let us first determine what the Occident has done for China.

Remembering what the ideal of Christianity had done for her; and then beholding this nation fastened in the clutches of prejudice, superstition, and degradation, the Occident sent her own children to sow the seed of western civilization. Schools were established, hospitals were built and churches were erected. The cobwebs and dust of antiquity were brushed aside, and the appeal of the missionaries, teachers and physicians acted as a tonic to revive their sluggish civilization. And the light of

Western civilization was turned on. The lurid night of the ages faded with the approach of a new dawn. Chinese institutions were energized, new thought was inspired. An effusion of new life burst forth. Different standards of living were established. Railroads were built; telegraph systems installed; industry developed; commerce encouraged; the opium curse abolished; the American system of education adopted; and all this because the Occident planted the leaven of a western civilization in a less fortunate country.

But the Occident has not given in vain. We shall also receive much. Indeed, this meeting will probably result in a world-wide change in every department of life.

It will mean a modification of the industrial world. In the past the Orient has played but a small role in the theatre of commerce; its almost illimitable natural resources have remained undeveloped, and her imports have exceeded her exports. Realizing now her tremendous possibilities, the Orient is challenging her people to rise to the occasion. to develop their industry, and compete with the Occident for world's markets. Truly, with the Oriental's ability to work long hours at so low a wage as five dollars per month the Occident will meet face to face an industrial war. What the material result of this commercial war will be, only future historians can relate, but this we may safely conclude, "The industrial temper of the whole world will be completely revolutionized.

The Occident will gain greater thoroughness in workmanship; its present nervous tension will be displaced by great composure; its hustle by deliberation; its expansiveness by intensiveness; wastefulness by conservation; quantity by quality. The Oriental deception in business will be replaced by the square deal, its miniature factories by gigantic industrial plants, its easy going ways by greater activity and fervor. Around the whole world will sweep a great wave of industrial change, which will make the world not only a great industrial neighborhood, but also an industrial brotherhood.

But there will be no less of a change in the political world. The last decade has produced almost miraculous victory for democracy in the political institutions of the world. Russia has established a duma, Turkey a constitution. Persia a parliament, Portugal a republic, England has thrown off feudal lordship and China has just honored our own nation by establishing "The United States of China." But this is just the beginning of a larger movement. The Orient has received the impulse of dynamic democracy. The Occident will learn the value of uniting into solid political organizations against such great national vices as the present liquor traffic, the social evil, and poverty. The masses of both civilizations will learn to muster their forces against partial and tyrannical governmental abuses. Democracy will no longer be a uptopian dream, but a living reality.

The greatest change will take place in the social world. A person to be symmetrical should be scientific, moral and religious. Such an individual has not yet been developed. But he will be developed by this coming together of the Orient and the Occident. The Occident has accomplished much, in fact our accomplishments have been epochmaking, phenomenal. We

have evolved a great science, the basis of our civilization. But in the making of this science we have developed the physical and neglected the social.

Our ideal is an Edison who is able to apply reason to things and produce inventions. Now truly these inventions are permanent achievements. They have made and will continue to make for civilization, but the Occidental mind does not look upon the work of Edison from the standpoint of the permanent contribution to social welfare, but from the standpoint of the physical. He has made a telephone, therefore commerce will increase, luxuries will be greater, the material world will be enlarged.

So completely has this thought of material subjugation fastened itself upon our minds, that we have placed the actually bigger work of our university professors, our doctors, lawyers, social workers and clergymen in a category below that of the business man. We think more about automobiles, flying machines, and telephones than we do about the question, "Am I my brother's keeper." Our mind is vastly more occupied in quest for gold than in quest for happiness and peace.

Now these conditions have counted for much in the development of a new world. But the time now is when the Occidental mind should place less emphasis on the particular and think in terms more universal. And it is in this transition from the particular to the universal in which we shall receive assistance from the Oriental.

The Oriental mind thinks in terms of the universal—of brotherhood. It has subordinated the particular and exalted the spiritual. It wants to know what its position in the world is. What is the real object of life? What should be the relation of man to man? And in this quest for this knowledge China has developed perhaps the best moral code in the world, and India has developed the most ardent religious zeal. And out of these conditions have come an emphasis on the family and group life, and also on the moral and spiritual life. Conscience has been given a place, and faith has been vitalized. And thus have developed two of the three conditions of life absolutely essential to a symmetrical man,—morality and religion.

It is a different attitude toward life that we shall receive. We are apparently in a crisis right now. We are a nervous civilization, the Orient composed. We are materialistic, the Orient spiritual. We are personal, the Orient impersonal. We have been belligerent, the Oriental peaceful. We exalt self, the Orient subordinates self. Hustle has been our motto, steadiness has been theirs. We have emphasized the individual, the Orient has placed the emphasis on the family. We have dealt with things, the Orient with persons and ideas.

When these two civilizations completely meet, these opposites will blend into a constructive positive. A new combination will be the result. Our outlook upon life will become broader and more unselfish. Our vision will be keener. Conscience will be developed. Our moral life emphasized and our social life will become more altruistic. A new world with a universal character will be developed. And then East and West shall be united into a grand harmony and brotherhood.